

Explaining the History of **AMERICAN**

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influences on the process itself. This is an ambitious assignment; in addition to the research involved, it requires that one devise a method of weighing a variety of personalities and beliefs in proportion to their relative influence on the decision. Once that is accomplished, then one must factor in the other domestic and systemic variables that shape and constrain behavior in order to complete the analysis.

Psychological theories allow us to gain additional insights about the history of U.S. foreign relations. Applying them presents great opportunities as well as great challenges. We must remain mindful of both.

National Security

MELVYN P. LEFFLER

Since I wrote my initial essay on national security for this volume more than a decade ago, the concept's utility for studying American foreign policy has grown. Its attractiveness stems from its synthetic qualities; its synthetic qualities stem from the fact that it is not a specific interpretation that focuses on a particular variable as much as a comprehensive framework that relates variables to one another and allows for diverse interpretations in particular periods and contexts.

National security policy encompasses the decisions and actions deemed imperative to protect domestic core values from external threats.¹ This definition is important because it underscores the relation of the international environment to the internal situation in the United States and accentuates the importance of people's ideas and perceptions in constructing the nature of external dangers as well as the meaning of national identity and vital interests.

By encouraging students of American foreign policy to examine both the foreign and the domestic factors shaping policy, by obligating them to look at the structure of the international system as well as the domestic ideas and interests shaping policy, the national security approach seeks to overcome some of the great divides in the study of American diplomatic history. Heretofore, the most influential studies of American diplomatic history have stressed the moralistic or legalistic or idealistic strains in American foreign policy, or, alternatively, the quest for territorial expansion and commercial empire and geopolitical influence.² More recently, two influential accounts of the origins of the Cold War place ideas and power in contradiction to one another: John Lewis Gaddis tells us that ideas were critical; Marc Trachtenberg argues that power realities were decisive, especially the contest over the control of German

¹ This definition emerges from the writings of P. G. Bock and Morton Berkowitz. See, for example, Bock and Berkowitz, "The Emerging Field of National Security," *World Politics* 19 (October 1966): 122-36.

² George Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* (Chicago, 1951); William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland, 1959).

power.³ Generally, realist historians believe that diplomatic behavior responds (or should respond) to the distribution of power in the international system; most revisionist and corporatist scholars and most historians who dwell on ideas and ideology assume that domestic economic requirements, social and cultural forces, and political constituencies are of overwhelming importance. By relating foreign threats to internal core values, the national security model encourages efforts to bridge the gaps between these divergent interpretive approaches, or, more precisely, to see that these variables must be studied in relation to one another and nuanced judgments made about how they bear on one another.

Although the national security approach acknowledges that power plays a role in the functioning of the international system and that interests shape the behavior of nations, it does not reify the salience of power or the centrality of interest in the construction of foreign policy. Indeed, in one of the more sophisticated approaches to the study of national security, Barry Buzan points out that realists who dwell on power and idealists who focus on peace often have obscured the meaning of national security, defined as the protection of core values from external threats.⁴ More recently, the most sophisticated approach to national security reconceptualizes the concept and takes explicit cognizance of the impact of culture and identity. National interests, argues Peter Katzenstein, "are constructed through a process of social interaction"; "security interests are defined by actors who respond to cultural factors." States are social actors operating in social environments. National identity is constructed as a result of human agency, and external threats are measured in relation to their perceived impact on core values.⁵

National security, as Arnold Wolfers wrote many years ago, is an ambiguous symbol. Security is used to encompass so many goals that there is no uniform agreement on what it encompasses and hence no universal understanding of the concept. Certainly, it involves more than national survival. But just what is involved is often left vague and indeterminate.⁶ Although the ambiguity presents formidable problems to policymakers and contemporary analysts, it should not handicap the work of historians. Indeed, it should explicitly encourage historians to focus attention on matters of central importance: How have policymakers assessed

3 John Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York, 1997); Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, 1999).

4 Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Brighton, UK, 1983), 4-9.

5 Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York, 1996), 1-32, and for the quotations, see p. 2.

6 Arnold Wolfers, "'National Security' as an Ambiguous Symbol," *Political Science Quarterly* 67 (December 1952): 481-502.

dangerous threats? How have they defined national interests? What are the relationships between interests and core values? How are policies formulated to ensure that their costs do not undermine the core values they are designed to foster?

External dangers come in many varieties. The historian of U.S. foreign policy must appraise the intentions and capabilities of the nation's prospective foes. But that step is only the beginning. Views of a potential adversary, after all, are heavily influenced by perceptions of other variables such as the impact of technological change, the appeal of one's own organizing ideology, the lessons of the past, and the structural patterns of the international system itself.⁷ In defining the Soviet Union as an inveterate foe after World War II, U.S. officials, as John Gaddis argues, were influenced by their perception of Stalin as a ruthless, aggressive tyrant and by their inclination to associate Communist Russia with Nazi Germany, a point made long ago by Thomas Paterson and Les Adler.⁸ But assessments of the international system were also instrumental in shaping the threat perception of American policymakers. Officials imparted dangerous connotations to developments within the international system, like the proliferation of bilateral trade agreements and exchange controls, the political instability within European governments, the popularity of leftist and communist parties, and the rise of revolutionary nationalist movements, especially in Asia.⁹

In studying the systemic sources of foreign policy behavior, the national security approach demands that analysts distinguish between realities and perceptions. This task, as simple as it sounds, is fraught with difficulty because it is often harder for historians to agree on what constitutes an actual danger than on what is a perceived threat. Nancy Mitchell shows, for example, that German imperial actions in the early 1900s engendered enormous feelings of insecurity and hostility among Americans, but that, in fact, German actions and policies were far less threatening than widely perceived. She analyzes how rhetoric, military images, and trade competition conjured up fears and shaped perceptions that were inconsistent with the realities of German behavior.¹⁰ Likewise, the very different interpretations of American diplomacy in the 1920s and 1930s between "realists"

7 Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA, 1979), 79-101; Ernest R. May, "Lessons" of the Past: *The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1973).

8 Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 24-25, 294-96; Les K. Adler and Thomas G. Paterson, "Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s-1950s," *American Historical Review* 75 (April 1970): 1046-64.

9 Melvyn P. Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48," *American Historical Review* 89 (April 1984): 356-78.

10 Nancy Mitchell, *The Danger of Dreams: German and American Imperialism in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 1999).

on the one hand and "revisionists" or "corporatists" on the other hand rests in part on assessments of the degree of threat to vital U.S. security interests in the interwar years. If there were no real threats before the middle or late 1930s, then contemporary proponents of arms limitation treaties, arbitration agreements, and non-aggression pacts can be viewed as functional pragmatists seeking to create a viable liberal capitalist international order rather than as naïve idealists disregarding the realities of an inherently unstable and ominous balance of power.¹¹

Perceptions of events abroad, however, are themselves greatly influenced by the ideas, ideals, and core values of the perceiver. The national security approach demands that as much attention be focused on how the American government determines its core values as on how it perceives external dangers. The term *core values* is used here rather than *vital interests* because the latter implies something more material and tangible than is appropriate for a national security imperative. The United States has rarely defined its core values in narrowly economic or territorial terms. Core values usually *fuse* material self-interest with more fundamental goals like the defense of the state's organizing ideology, such as liberal capitalism, the protection of its political institutions, and the safeguarding of its physical base or territorial integrity. "The purpose of America is to defend a way of life rather than merely to defend property, homes, or lives," said Dwight D. Eisenhower. In fact, much of the recent literature on the Eisenhower presidency stresses the president's concerns with domestic core values as does my own work on Eisenhower's predecessor, Harry S. Truman.¹²

To determine core values, historians must identify key groups, agencies, and individuals, examine their goals and ideas, and analyze how trade-offs are made. Decision makers and interest groups will have different internal and sometimes conflicting internal and external objectives. Core values are the goals that emerge as priorities after the trade-offs are made; core values are the objectives that merge ideological precepts and cultural symbols like democracy, self-determination, and race consciousness with concrete interests like access to markets and raw materials and the defense of territory; core values are the interests that are pursued

11 For a reevaluation of the relative strength and efficacy of American military capabilities in the 1920s and early 1930s see John Braeman, "Power and Diplomacy: The 1920s Reappraised," *Review of Politics* 44 (July 1982): 342-69; also see Melvyn P. Leffler, "Political Isolationism, Economic Expansionism, or Diplomatic Realism: American Policy Toward Western Europe, 1921-1933," *Perspectives in American History* 8 (1974): 413-61.

12 Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York, 1998); Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, 1992).

notwithstanding the costs incurred; core values are the goals worth fighting for. In his work on Woodrow Wilson, for example, N. Gordon Levin, Jr., beautifully describes how, when faced with unrestricted German submarine warfare, Woodrow Wilson fused ideological, economic, and geopolitical considerations. Together these factors became core values and influenced his decisions for war, for intervention, and for the assumption of political obligations abroad.¹³

Different groups may have different core values or different strategies for pursuing the same core values. The struggle between interventionists and isolationists on the eve of World War II illuminates how groups sharing similar core values could disagree about strategies. Interventionists believed aid to the Allies was essential to protect American liberal capitalism and the territorial integrity of the United States; isolationists believed such aid would aggrandize the powers of the chief executive and the federal government, provoke the Axis powers, and thereby endanger not only the nation's physical safety but also its political institutions and ideology.¹⁴ Explaining how core values are translated into policy requires a careful investigation and a viable theory of the relationship of the state to society.¹⁵

The effort to show how core values emerge in the policymaking process forces the diplomatic historian to study the importance of foreign policy goals in relation to the officials' other objectives. As they seek to achieve diplomatic aims, officials (and leaders of private organizations) may encounter costs that exceed the value of the goals themselves.¹⁶ For example, much as Republican officials in the 1920s yearned for markets abroad, they were unwilling to forego the protection of the home market; much as they wanted international financial stability, they were reluctant to cancel the war debts or raise taxes; much as they sought good relations with the Japanese, they were unwilling to eliminate the discriminatory provisions in the immigration laws. In these cases the foreign policy benefits did not seem to outweigh the domestic costs. Hence the diplomatic objectives,

13 Buzan, *People, States, and Fear*, 36-72; Levin, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution* (New York, 1968).

14 Justus D. Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941* (New York, 2000); Waldo Heinrichs, *Threshold of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Entry into World War II* (New York, 1988).

15 One can choose from a variety of Marxist or pluralist approaches. One can see the state acting autonomously or as a captive of particular groups or classes. For some stimulating views and essays see Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society: An Analysis of the Western System of Power* (New York, 1969); Charles E. Lindblom, *Politics and Markets: The World's Political Economic Systems* (New York, 1977); and Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *Between Power and Plenty: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial States* (Madison, 1978); and Charles Bright and Susan Hardings, eds., *Statemaking and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory* (Ann Arbor, 1984).

16 Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York, 1981), 50-105.

significant though they were, never became core values.¹⁷ American history is replete with examples demonstrating a quest for territory, markets, and influence and with examples demonstrating restraint. An interpretive framework for the study of American foreign relations must be able to explain why Theodore Roosevelt sent troops to the Caribbean and Central America and why Franklin Roosevelt did not; why Wilson hesitated to intervene in Europe in 1914–1916 but chose to do so in 1917; why the United States resisted the role of hegemon in the interwar years yet assumed it after World War II; why the United States eschewed political commitments and strategic obligations in one era while it welcomed them in another.

The protection and pursuit of core values requires the exercise of power. Power is the capacity to achieve intended results. Power may be an end in itself as well as a means toward an end. In the twentieth century, power (including military power) derives primarily from economic capabilities. Power stems from the scale, vigor, and productivity of one's internal economy and its access to or control over other countries' industrial infrastructure, skilled manpower, and raw materials. Power is relative.¹⁸

The chief characteristic of twentieth-century American foreign policy has been the willingness and capacity of the United States to develop and exert its power beyond its nineteenth-century range to influence the economic, political, and military affairs of Europe and Asia. This trend has manifested itself in the evolution of the Open Door policy, in the aid to the Allies in both world wars, in the wielding of American financial leverage, in the assumption of strategic obligations, in the deployment of troops overseas, in the provision of economic and military assistance, in the undertaking of covert operations, in the huge expenditures on armaments, in the growth of the American multinational corporation, and in the assumption of a hegemonic role over the world capitalist system. The national security approach helps to make sense out of these developments. Alterations in the distribution of power, changes in the international

17 Melvyn P. Leffler, "1921–1932: Expansionist Impulses and Domestic Constraints," in *Economics and World Power: An Assessment of American Diplomacy since 1789*, ed. William H. Becker and Samuel F. Wells, Jr. (New York, 1984), 225–75.

18 This definition of power comes from Bertrand Russell and was used by Paul Nitze's Policy Planning Staff in the Department of State in the early 1950s. See Paper Drafted by the Policy Planning Staff, "Basic Issues Raised by Draft NSC 'Reappraisal of U.S. Objectives and Strategy for National Security,'" n.d. [July 1952], U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954* (Washington, DC, 1984), 2:61 (hereafter FRUS); Gilpin, *War and Change*, 67–68; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York, 1987); and Klaus Knorr, *Power and Wealth: The Political Economy of International Power* (New York, 1973).

system, and developments in technology influence the perception of threat and the definition of core values and impel American officials to exercise power in varying ways.

Notwithstanding the desire of American officials in the 1920s and 1930s to expand markets, stabilize European affairs, pursue investment opportunities, and gain control over raw materials abroad, those goals did not become vital interests worth fighting for until changes in the international system impelled American officials to redefine them as core values. The Axis domination of much of Europe and Asia in 1940 and 1941, for example, endangered markets and investment opportunities.¹⁹ But far more important, Axis aggrandizement enabled prospective adversaries of the United States to mobilize additional resources, coopt other nations' industrial infrastructure, and secure forward bases. Nazi conquests, moreover, raised the possibility that Latin American countries, which had traditionally traded largely with the European continent, would be sucked into the Axis orbit. To deal with autarkic and regimented trade practices abroad and to protect the United States from the growing military capabilities of the adversary, American officials felt they had to mobilize, raise taxes, monitor potential subversives, and prepare to assist or perhaps even take over the export sector of the American economy. Even if the United States had not been attacked, core values were at stake, not because the Axis powers crushed the self-determination of other nations or jeopardized the world capitalist system, but because foreign threats of such magnitude required a reordering of the domestic political economy, portended additional restrictions on civil liberties and individual rights, and endangered the nation's physical integrity and organizing ideology. The purpose of Roosevelt's partial internationalism, writes John Harper, "was not universal salvation for its own sake but the safeguarding of democracy in the United States."²⁰

After World War II the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe, the vacuums of power in Western Europe and northeast Asia, and the emergence of revolutionary nationalism in the Third World created a similar specter. American core values were perceived to be at risk. The Kremlin might have neither the intention nor the capability to wage war effectively against the United States, but prudence dictated that the United States organize and

19 For this view, see Patrick J. Hearden, *Roosevelt Confronts Hitler: America's Entry into World War II* (DeKalb, IL, 1986); Lloyd C. Gardner, *Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy* (Madison, 1964).

20 Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, 1994), 112–22; John Lamberton Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean G. Acheson* (New York, 1994), 64; Melvyn P. Leffler, "Was 1947 a Turning Point in American Foreign Policy?" in *Centerstage: American Diplomacy Since the Second World War*, ed. L. Carl Brown (New York, 1989), 19–42.

project its own power to protect its core values. If the country did not do so, if it withdrew to the Western Hemisphere, President Harry S. Truman warned that the American people would have to accept

a much higher level of mobilization than we have today. It would require a stringent and comprehensive system of allocation and rationing in order to husband our smaller resources. It would require us to become a garrison state, and to impose upon ourselves a system of centralized regimentation unlike anything we have ever known. In the end, . . . we would face the prospect of bloody battle and on our own shores. The ultimate costs of such a policy would be incalculable. Its adoption would be a mandate for national suicide.²¹

During the Cold War years, the perception of an external threat to core values inspired U.S. officials to mobilize American power in unprecedented ways. The Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are two excellent examples. For the first time in American history the U.S. government appropriated billions of dollars for the rehabilitation of European economies and assumed strategic obligations to protect European countries. In the 1920s, Republican policymakers also had been cognizant of the interdependence of the economies of Europe and the United States.²² Nevertheless, they had eschewed long-term governmental aid and security commitments. How does one account for the willingness of American officials to incur such financial sacrifices and strategic commitments after World War II but not after World War I?

According to the national security approach, the answer rests primarily in the ways American officials perceived external threats to core values. In the mid-1940s, the political and economic vulnerability of Western European governments, the popularity of Communist parties in France, Italy, and Greece, and the economic and social problems beleaguering Germany adumbrated a significant strengthening of the Soviet Union. And if this happened, Truman and his advisers believed, there would be profound repercussions in the way the U.S. government would have to structure its domestic economy and conduct its internal affairs. Because the configuration of power in the international system was profoundly different in the mid-1920s, external developments did not pose as much danger and hence did not justify the allocation of government aid and the assumption of overseas strategic obligations.

21 *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1952-1953* (Washington, DC, 1966), 189.

22 Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Elusive Quest: America's Pursuit of European Stability and French Security, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill, 1979); Michael J. Hogan, *Informal Empire: The Private Structure of Cooperation in Anglo-American Economic Relations, 1918-1928* (Columbia, MO, 1977); Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca, NY, 1984).

But even when the perception of threat is great, the existence of core values places constraints on the pursuit of foreign policy goals. Aaron Friedberg insightfully shows how "the basic structure of American government institutions, the interests and relative strength of various groups (both within the government itself and in society at large), and the content of prevailing ideas or ideology" circumscribed the growth of a garrison state even during the most scary years of the Cold War. And although these fundamental ideas and institutions limited government ownership, central planning, and military expenditures, they ultimately had a profound impact on the evolution of the Cold War. "By preventing some of the worst, most stifling excesses of statism, these countervailing tendencies made it easier for the United States to preserve its economic vitality and technological dynamism, to maintain domestic political support for a protracted strategic competition and to stay the course in that competition better than its supremely statist rival."²³ The national security approach, by relating perceptions of threat to core values, helps explain why particular tactics are adopted as policies and why others are rejected.

Although occasionally criticized for its disregard of ideological and cultural concepts, the national security approach to the study of American foreign relations should be conceived as perfectly congruent with these new directions of scholarship.²⁴ Central to the national security approach is the concept of core values. National security is about the protection of core values, that is, the identification of threats and the adoption of policies to protect core values. The new studies on culture and ideology mesh seamlessly with the synthetic qualities of a national security paradigm because they help to illuminate the construction and meaning of core values. In his insightful book on social scientists and nation building in the Kennedy era, Michael Latham writes that "A larger, more deliberate analysis of ideology and identity . . . can open new areas of inquiry by introducing a less reductive analysis of the 'interests' that critics have typically discerned behind official discourse." And he concludes that "in the midst of a collapsing European colonial order, social scientists and Kennedy administration policymakers conceived of [modernization] as a means to promote a liberal world in which the development of 'emerging' nations would protect the security of the United States."²⁵

23 Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy* (Princeton, 2000), especially pp. 4-5, 60-61.

24 William O. Walker, III, "Melvyn P. Leffler, Ideology, and American Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 20 (Fall 1996): 663-73; Bruce Cumings, "Revising Postrevisionism: or, The Poverty of Theory in Diplomatic History," *ibid.*, 17 (Fall 1993): 563-64ff.

25 Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill, 2000), quotations on pp. 8-9, 209.

The fervor with which the United States waged the Cold War can only be grasped by understanding the role of ideology in the construction of American national identity. In his succinct, valuable volume on *Manifest Destiny* in American history, Anders Stephanson reminds us of the puritanical, millennial, and religious impulses that infuse America's approach to the world. Other factors might have influenced the Cold War, he writes, "but the operative framework in which they all fit is the story of American exceptionalism, with its missionary implications."²⁶ And this emphasis on American nationalist ideology, sometimes conflated with notions of an American century or a Wilsonian century, pulsates through the new foreign policy literature. "American nationalist ideology," writes John Fousek, "provided the principal underpinning for the broad public consensus that supported Cold War foreign policy."²⁷

But when translated into policy, the ideological fervor was always calibrated. Nobody has shown the interplay of ideas and policies better than Michael Hogan in his recent book on the origins of the national security state. When all is said and done, he writes, "the most important constraints on the national security state were built into the country's democratic institutions and political culture." American institutions, ideas, and ideals, indeed American ideology, however constructed by personages as different as Robert Taft and Harry Truman, set the parameters for the conduct of foreign policy. "Traditional values and institutions channeled American policy and American state making in some directions while damning them up in others. The American people and their leaders, or at least the best of them, would go so far and no further, lest a reckless abandon destroy the very Republic they sought to protect."²⁸

By focusing on the relationship of threat perception to core values, the national security approach has the capacity to weave together ideology and policy in illuminating ways. Other approaches to American foreign policy, although sophisticated and incisive, do not offer the same synthetic capacity both to interpret change over time and to explain discrete decisions at given moments. Corporatist historians, for example, show how business corporations, private-public linkages, and supranational institutions served as policy instruments. Continuities between the

26 Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York, 1995), 124.

27 John Fousek, *To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, 2000), 2; Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900* (Chicago, 1999); Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 1994).

28 Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (New York, 1998), quotations on 474-75, 482.

two post-world war eras are emphasized; change minimized.²⁹ But many students of American history believe the Marshall Plan and NATO represented significant change and want to know how to account for it. As splendidly as the corporatist approach elucidates the tactical changes in policy, it is less successful in explaining motivations. It remains difficult, for example, to find the evidence to show that the New Deal coalition had a greater bearing on the formulation of the Marshall Plan than did the drastically altered configuration of power in post-World War Europe.

Corporatism has the capacity to illuminate *how* American officials hoped to cast a modern, integrated industrial economy. But to be persuasive as an overarching synthesis of American foreign policy, it must address matters of motivation as boldly and provocatively as did an earlier generation of revisionists, and it must cast its net just as widely. Either by self-definition or by practice, corporatist writers have rarely dealt with threat perception, arms expenditures, military assistance, force deployments, nuclear strategy, military alliances, political commitments, and client states in the Third World – matters central to the study of international diplomacy in the post-World War II era. Much to my own chagrin, because I did not see how the corporatist model could explain many of these developments, I relegated it to an instrumentalist, rather than interpretive, role in my writing on the Cold War, despite the great relevance that it had to my analysis of American diplomacy in the 1920s.

Because it calls for integrating core values, power, and foreign threats, the national security approach forces historians to study geopolitical and strategic issues in relation to political economy, ideology, and culture. Attention is focused on how policymakers linked means and ends and on how they sought to balance commitments and resources. In seeking to accomplish those tasks, scholars can and should use techniques from other interpretive approaches and from other disciplines. In discussing threat perception, psychological approaches will help; in discussing core values, theories of decision making and organizational behavior will be useful and an understanding of culture and ideology will be indispensable; in discussing the exercise of power, corporatist, realist, and world systems approaches will be applicable.

Heretofore the integrative potential of the national security approach has been obscured by the fact that it has become so closely linked to debates over the origins of the Cold War. John Lewis Gaddis, the founder of post-revisionism, initially sought to use a national security approach

29 See especially Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Modern Europe, 1947-1952* (New York, 1987).

to refute the revisionist interpretation of the Cold War. He disputed the centrality of economic factors and minimized American responsibility for the Cold War. More recently, he has looked at the new evidence emanating from communist archives and claimed that containment was a response to the perceived evils of communist totalitarianism and the threats posed by Stalinist rule. In response to the external menace, the United States utilized its power to create an empire of its own, but it was a defensive empire aimed at creating independent centers of democratic power and fashioning a world of diversity.³⁰

Gaddis's analysis of how democratic sensibilities shaped the U.S. approach to Western Europe, Germany, and Japan is insightful, but it is not the only one that can flow from an analysis of threats to core values. The American sense of threat, it can be argued, was not so much a function of Stalin's personality; it resulted from an acute understanding of the vulnerabilities of the international system and the perceived capacity of the Kremlin to take advantage of those vulnerabilities. And the configuration of power that the United States sought was not a balance of power, but a preponderance of power.³¹ When Dean Acheson, Robert Lovett, Paul Nitze, and most other influential policymakers (except for George Kennan) talked about power, they meant "preponderant power." And preponderant power, in the words of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, was designed to achieve "a hierarchy of objectives, namely: a. strength at the center (Western Europe, West Germany, and Japan); b. strength at the periphery (Southeast Asia, Middle East, and North Africa); c. the retraction of Soviet power and a change in the Soviet system."³²

Policymakers' belief that it was a vital American interest to integrate core and periphery suggests that there should be a close convergence between the national security approach to understanding American diplomatic history and the world systems model outlined by Thomas J. McCormick in this volume. There are some important distinctions, however. The American economy always has functioned as part of the world capitalist system, but only occasionally has its participation in that system dictated critical foreign policy decisions. For example, American officials rejected a hegemonic role for the United States in 1919 and spurned responsibility for the effective functioning of the world capitalist system during the Great Depression. When the United States did assume the role

30 John L. Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York, 1972); idem, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York, 1982); idem, "The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 7 (Summer 1983): 171-90; idem, *We Now Know*.

31 Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*.

32 Policy Planning Staff, "Basic Issues," n.d. [July 1952], FRUS, 1952-1954, 2:62-63.

of hegemon in the late 1940s, American policymakers were inspired as much by their concern for America's long-term physical security and for its domestic political freedoms and free enterprise economy as by solicitude for the world capitalist system itself. For although McCormick is right to say that the Truman administration faced a global, systemwide capitalist crisis in early 1950, policymakers nevertheless believed that the foundering of the system would redound to the benefit of the Kremlin. If the Soviet Union could attract part of the periphery or lure Germany or Japan into its orbit, Soviet strength would grow and the power of the Western alliance would erode. Eventually, the Kremlin might gather enough resources, industrial infrastructure, military capabilities, and self-confidence to challenge more vital American interests and to wage war effectively should it erupt through miscalculation or accident.

According to official Washington, prudence dictated that the United States intervene on the periphery, rearm Germany, and militarize its foreign policy. If the Truman administration did not do so, it might subsequently encounter even greater dangers. It might then have to multiply its defense expenditures, raise taxes, interfere in the operation of the marketplace economy, and infringe on individual rights in ways that far exceeded the possibilities contemplated in NSC 68 and the worst excesses of the McCarthy era. The real threat therefore emanated not from the malfunctioning of the capitalist system, but from the Kremlin's ability to capitalize upon it; the core values that were endangered were not markets, raw materials, and overseas investment opportunities, but political liberty and free enterprise at home. Truman, Acheson, and Nitze wanted to integrate core and periphery, as McCormick incisively argues, but for more complex reasons (related to strategy, geopolitics, and ideology) than the world systems approach allows for.

Preponderance and hegemony, as Paul Kennedy and Robert Gilpin have written, confer advantages and impose costs. If threats are exaggerated and commitments overextended, if one's credibility is vested in the achievement of too many goals, one's relative power will erode and one's core values may become imperiled. There is an ominous dynamic influencing the behavioral patterns of great powers.³³ Whether or not the United States will succumb to it will depend on whether groups, bureaucracies, and individual policymakers can find a means of restoring a viable equilibrium among threats, core values, and the exercise of power.

The national security model can and should serve as a framework for studying the history of American foreign policy in the eighteenth and

33 Gilpin, *War and Change*; Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War," *International Security* 25 (Summer 2000): 36-37.

nineteenth centuries as well as in the twentieth. For although changing perceptions of space and time caused by technological change made it imperative to integrate policy in a more timely manner after World War II, the use of power to overcome threats and defend core values has been an enduring element of the American diplomatic experience. Jefferson and Madison, after all, sought to use economic leverage and then went to war to protect neutral rights, to foster trade, and to demonstrate the viability of the republican form of government. Only a few historians, however, have begun to apply the national security model to the pre-atomic era.³⁴ Although that model is not well designed to evaluate and measure the impact of American policies on foreign countries, it is eminently well designed to study policy formulation at any given period of time. And it can be used in a comparative framework to study the behavior of foreign governments as well as that of the United States.³⁵ Not the least of the advantages of the national security model is that it encompasses diverse variables, allows for different weights to be assigned to them, and constitutes the basis for synthesis without imposing rigidity and uniformity.

34 Thomas H. Buckley and Edwin B. Strong, Jr., *American Foreign Policy and National Security Policies, 1914-1945* (Knoxville, 1987); James Chace and Caleb Carr, *America Invulnerable: The Quest for Absolute Insecurity from 1812 to Star Wars* (New York, 1988); James E. Lewis, Jr., *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783-1829* (Chapel Hill, 1998); Mitchell, *Danger of Dreams*.

35 Katzenstein, *Culture of National Security*.

Corporatism

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One of the challenges facing diplomatic historians is to construct an analytical framework that illuminates both the internal and external sources of foreign policy. Historians may disagree over which of these sources is more important or begin at different ends of the chain of causation. They may see American leaders as responding to the demands of a domestic system that opens outward to the world, thereby shaping the basic thrust and particular goals of diplomacy, or as reacting to imperatives embedded in the global balance of power. But wherever they start, the explanatory power of their work will be diminished if one set of sources is ignored or treated as clearly peripheral to the long-term pattern of American diplomacy. Revisionist historians, for example, have generally highlighted the domestic economic and ideological influences on policy without elaborating the geopolitical considerations that also figured in the thinking of American leaders. Postrevisionists, on the other hand, have concentrated on policymaking elites in the government and on issues of national security, including shifts in the balance of power and various strategies to contain aggressors and promote the national interest. While their approach bridges the gap between diplomatic history and political science, it fails to explore the nature of the American system or its influence on diplomacy, and thus falls short of a coherent synthesis.

Still needed is a framework that can accommodate both internal and external imperatives, whatever the point of departure, and that borrows as much from the literature on domestic processes as from the perspectives of political science. Nor is this the only challenge facing diplomatic historians. Because foreign relations cannot be contained within the state, or even the nation, any such framework has to account for the important role played by nonstate actors, as well as government officials, and not only their role in shaping government policy but also the part they played in creating the international environment in which policy operated. At the same time, such a framework has to connect national policy to a process that extends beyond the nation, as well as the state. It has to situate American policy internationally by noting the role of other states and by linking